

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 6, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor of Florida
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Via electronic correspondence.

Dear Governor DeSantis:

We write in regards to waivers for work requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and recertification requirements for Medicaid, SNAP, and TANF beneficiaries.^[1] It is unconscionable to limit aid for our most disadvantaged constituents while Florida continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge you to reinstate and extend all work requirement and recertification waivers until we are certain that the pandemic no longer threatens Floridians and Florida's economy and until the job market returns to pre-COVID-19 levels.

It is clear the economic and health crises are affecting Floridians' ability to make ends meet. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), 11 percent of adults in Florida report not having enough to eat and 23 percent of adults living with children in Florida have reported the children do not have enough to eat due to economic difficulties between June 25th and July 7th. The same study cited a 36 percent increase in SNAP beneficiaries in Florida between February and May.^[2] Families in Florida that have benefitted from the waiver of requirements and recertifications during the pandemic are the same families that are more likely to lose these benefits due to the reinstatement of restrictions that affect eligibility for these programs. Waiving requirements for basic safety nets like Medicaid, SNAP, and TANF can support those struggling to acquire necessities like nutritious meals, healthcare, and financial stability in a time of great uncertainty.

As you know, our state's unemployment as reported by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) for August was 8.4 percent; double the rate of August 2019.^[3] Unemployed Floridians from all sectors of our economy face immense uncertainty in the job

[1] "[Florida food stamp recipients may see limits to aid return this week.](#)" *The Tampa Bay Times*. Alison Ross. August 31, 2020. [Economic Self-Sufficiency ACCESS](#). Department of Children & Families (DCF) COVID-19 Information. Accessed: September 9, 2020.

[2] "[More Relief Needed to Alleviate Hardship | Households Struggle to Afford Food, Pay Rent, Emerging Data Show.](#)" Sharon Parrott, Arloc Sherman, Joseph Llobrera, Alicia Mazzara, Jennifer Beltrán, and Michael Leachman. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP). July 21, 2020.

[3] "[Unemployment Rate Seasonally Adjusted, January 1976-August 2020.](#)" Prepared by: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO). Update Released: September 18, 2020.

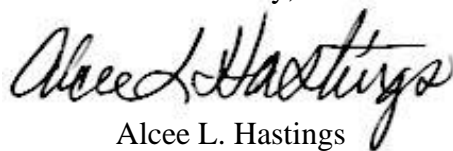
market, in their ability to access nutritious food, and in their ability to access afford housing. The tourism industry, one of Florida's top economic contributors, illustrates these concerns. VISIT FLORIDA Research estimates a loss of visitors for the first and second quarters of 2020 of 35.2 percent, only receiving 44.8 million visitors, compared to almost 70 million visitors in 2019.^[4] In addition to the concerning rates of unemployment now, as well as the uncertainty the future job market holds, far too many Floridians cannot confidently and safely go into work or send their kids to school due to the presence of COVID-19 in their communities. We must continue to thoroughly monitor the spread of COVID-19 and use guidance to develop further plans to protect communities from another spike like the one Floridians experienced this summer—this is especially important as we enter flu season.

It is unclear how quickly our economy will rebound and make up for the enormous losses experienced over the last few months. What is clear is that requiring a person to be employed before being able to access life sustaining benefits will exclude the most vulnerable who are unable to reenter the workforce due to barriers like the inability to secure safe and affordable childcare, or the need to care for elderly or ill family members. For many Floridians, meeting work requirements for these benefits amid a pandemic and economic downturn of enormous proportions is an impossibility. Further, waiving the recertification requirements until the end of the pandemic for beneficiaries will be crucial for their overall stability so they can focus their energy and time on keeping their families healthy and their heads above the water.

There is a clear need to extend waivers for SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid until such time as Florida's unemployment rate reaches the statewide 2019 average of 3.1 percent;^[5] the statewide rate of COVID-19 positivity cases reaches 5 percent or below for 14 days, per World Health Organization (WHO) guidance;^[6] and the statewide State of Emergency Declaration originally imposed by Executive Order (E.O.) No. 2020-52-COVID is lifted for at least 60 days.^[7] As Governor of Florida, it is your responsibility to ensure that all Floridians have the ability to access any and all safety net programs. We stand ready to assist you in this endeavor.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, we hope to continue to work with your office to resolve these complex problems that lie ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alcee L. Hastings". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Alcee" and last name "Hastings" clearly legible.

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

^[4] ["Florida Visitor Estimates: 2019 | 2020."](#) Resources | Research. VISIT FLORIDA. Accessed September 1, 2020.

^[5] ["Regional and State Unemployment, 2019 Annual Average Summary."](#) Economic News Release. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Published: March 4, 2020. Accessed: September 1, 2020.

^[6] ["Which U.S. States Meet WHO Recommended Testing Criteria?"](#) Coronavirus Resource Center. Johns Hopkins. Accessed: September 21, 2020.

^[7] ["#2020-52 Executive Order"](#) (E.O.) re: Emergency Management – COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. Originally issued March 9, 2020. Extended by E.O. #2020-114 on May 8, 2020 for 60 days and E.O. #2020-166 on July 7, 2020 for 60 days.

//s//

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

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Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

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Al Lawson
Member of Congress

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Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

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Val B. Demings
Member of Congress

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Darren Soto
Member of Congress

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Charlie Crist
Member of Congress

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Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

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Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress

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Donna Shalala
Member of Congress

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Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

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Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress

CC: Secretary Chad Poppell
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